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ABSTRACT

This book focuses on the relationship between ethnic and racial identity and academic engagement, examining in particular the role that schools and classrooms play in shaping this relationship. It examines the lives of students to ask how they conceptualize and assert their ethnic and racial identities across varied curricular settings. The case studies of 12 high school students, drawn from a longitudinal investigation of 55 urban high school students, show that ethnic and racial identities are dependent on the range of cultural and intercultural phenomena that individuals mediate within varied social matrices. Identity is conceptualized as a process that develops in a matrix of structuring social and institutional relationships and practices. Part I frames the discussion of identity and academic engagement. Part II focuses more closely on individuals who challenge the social categories and stereotypes in which they have been placed. Part III considers other students in the process of reproducing the social categories to which they have been assigned. Part IV then focuses on the speech acts that students perceive as powerful enough to counteract the other messages they have encountered about their racial and ethnic backgrounds. Part V links ethnographic data to educational and theoretical questions and their implications for multicultural education and the acceptance of ethnic flexibility. (Contains 5 tables and 162 references.) (SLD)

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